

17. (new) A transgenic plant comprising a recombinant polynucleotide encoding a transcription factor, the recombinant polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a conserved domain of a plant AP2 transcription factor and a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide comprising a homologous window sequence of at least 6 consecutive amino acids selected from SEQ ID NO: 12, 18, 22, 34, 66, 82, and 96, wherein the window sequence is outside of the conserved domain, and wherein expression of the recombinant polynucleotide enhances the plant's tolerance to salt, heat, drought, osmotic stress, cold, freezing, or nutrient or pathogen stress when compared with the same trait of another plant lacking the recombinant polynucleotide.

18. (new) The transgenic plant of claim 17, wherein the nucleotide sequence encodes a polypeptide comprising a conserved domain selected from SEQ ID NO: 12, 18, 22, 34, 66, 82, and 96, wherein the conserved domain is selected from a localization domain, an activation domain, a repression domain, an oligomerization domain, and a DNA binding domain.

19. (new) The transgenic plant of claim 17, wherein the recombinant polynucleotide further comprises a promoter operably linked to said nucleotide sequence.

20. (new) The transgenic plant of claim 19, wherein said promoter is constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific.

21. (new) The transgenic plant of claim 17, wherein SEQ ID NO: 18 is selected.

22. (new) The transgenic plant of claim 19, wherein the nucleotide sequence is SEQ ID NO: 18.

23. (new) A method for enhancing the disease tolerance or resistance of a plant comprising transforming a plant with a recombinant polynucleotide encoding a transcription factor, the recombinant polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a conserved domain of a plant AP2 transcription factor and a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide comprising a homologous window sequence of at least 6 consecutive amino acids selected from SEQ ID NO: 12, 18, 22, 34, 66, 82, and 96, wherein the window sequence is outside of the conserved domain, whereby expression of the recombinant polynucleotide enhances the plant's tolerance to salt, heat, drought, osmotic stress, cold, freezing, or nutrient or pathogen stress when compared with the same trait of another plant lacking the recombinant polynucleotide.

24. (new) The method of claim 23, wherein the nucleotide sequence encodes a polypeptide comprising a conserved domain selected from SEQ ID NO: 12, 18, 22, 34, 66, 82, and 96, wherein the conserved domain is selected from a localization domain, an activation domain, a repression domain, an oligomerization domain, and a DNA binding domain.

25. (new) The method of claim 23, wherein the recombinant polynucleotide further comprises a promoter operably linked to said nucleotide sequence.

26. (new) The method of claim 25, wherein said promoter is constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific.

26. (new) The method of claim 23, wherein SEQ ID NO: 18 is selected.

27. (new) The method of claim 25, wherein the nucleotide sequence is SEQ ID NO: 18.

28. (new) A method for altering the expression levels of at least one gene in a plant comprising transforming the plant with a recombinant polynucleotide encoding a transcription factor, the recombinant polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a conserved domain of a plant AP2 transcription factor and a nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide comprising a homologous window sequence of at least 6 consecutive amino acids selected from SEQ ID NO: 12, 18, 22, 34, 66, 82, and 96, wherein the window sequence is outside of the conserved domain, wherein expression of the recombinant polynucleotide enhances the plant's tolerance to salt, heat, drought, osmotic stress, cold, freezing, or nutrient or pathogen stress.

29. (new) The method of claim 28, wherein said recombinant polynucleotide encodes a polypeptide comprising a conserved domain selected from SEQ ID NO: 12, 18, 22, 34, 66, 82, and 96, wherein the conserved domain is selected from a localization domain, an activation domain, a repression domain, an oligomerization domain, and a DNA binding domain.

30. (new) The method of claim 28, wherein the nucleotide sequence further comprises a promoter operably linked to said nucleotide sequence.

31. (new) The method of claim 30, wherein said promoter is constitutive, inducible, or tissue-specific.

32. (new) The method of claim 28, wherein SEQ ID NO: 18 is selected.

33. (new) The method of claim 30, wherein the nucleotide sequence is SEQ ID NO: 18.

C 34. (new) A method for enhancing the disease tolerance or resistance in a plant comprising transforming the plant with a recombinant polynucleotide comprising at least 18 consecutive nucleotides of a sequence selected from SEQ ID NO: 11, 17, 21, 33, 65, 81, and 95, whereby expression of the recombinant polynucleotide enhances the plant's tolerance to salt, heat, drought, osmotic stress, cold, freezing, or nutrient or pathogen stress when compared with the same trait of another plant lacking the recombinant polynucleotide.

35. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein the recombinant polynucleotide comprises a conserved domain comprises one or more of a localization domain, an activation domain, a repression domain, an oligomerization domain, and a DNA binding domain.

36. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein SEQ ID NO: 17 is selected.

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